

**RAOEF MAMEDOV**

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## **Raoef Mamedov Biography**

Born January 26, 1956 in Gjendja, Azerbaijan.

- In 1973, Raoef Mamedov completed his secondary education and took up a study at the Agricultural Academy of Azerbaidjan. In his second year of study he was drafted for military service in the Soviet Army.
- After his military service he worked as a locksmith from 1976 to 1980. Later on he was employed as a chauffer, and after, he worked as a social worker in a mental hospital.
- In 1980, he took up a study at the director's branch of the State Film Academy, (Gerasimov-Institute). He completed this study with excellent results in 1985.
- Since 1985 Raoef has been working as a film director in Moscow.
- He is currently working as a professor at the Film Academy and as a director for Central Television in Moscow.

### Art films:

- "The Isle of the Sunken Ships," in collaboration with E. Ginzboerg, 'LENFILM,' which won the Silver Rose at the international film festival in Montreux, Switzerland.
- "De Virgin of Rouan, nicknamed "Boule de Suif," in collaboration with E. Ginzboerg, CT 'EKARAN,' which won yet another Silver Rose at the international film festival in Montreux.

### Short films:

- "One Saturday at Riga"
- "Alexander Koerljandski"
- "Comments on the Generally Known"

1997

Raoef began to work as an artist and realized two photo projects known as "The Last Supper" and "Adam and Eve."

1998

Exhibition "The Last Supper," New Testament scenes in photographic adaptation, Galerie Lilja Zakirova, Heusden a/d Maas, The Netherlands.

1999

- Exhibition in Museum of the Bible, Amsterdam, The Netherlands.
- Presentation at the fair Art Basel 30, Basel, Switzerland, by Gallery Lilja Zakirova.

2000

- Presentation in the Church H. Lambertus, Linden, The Netherlands.
- Exhibition "Adam and Eve, the Story of Mankind," Gallery Lilja Zakirova.
- Presentation "Adam and Eve, the Story of Mankind," Fair KunstRai, Amsterdam, The Netherlands.
- Presentation at the Art Forum, Berlin, Germany, by Gallery Aidan.
- Participation in the exhibition, "Jesus in the Golden Age," Kunsthal Rotterdam, The Netherlands.

2001

- Participation in the exhibition "Between Earth and Heaven," Museum of Modern Art, Oostende, Belgium.

2002

- Participation in the exhibition "Comer o no Comer," Salamance, Spain.
- Presentation at Corpus Christi, Hotel de Sully, Paris, France.

2003

- Presentation at Amory Show, New York, NY, USA, by Aidan Gallery.
- Exhibition in Domkerk, Utrecht, The Netherlands.
- Participation in the Art Frankfurt fair, Germany.
- Exhibition in Museum of Israel, Jerusalem, Israel.

2004

- Exhibition "The Games On the Window Sills," Gallery Lilja Zakirova..
- Presentation "The Games On the Window Sills" at Armory Show, New York, NY, USA by Aidan Gallery.
- Presentation "Adam and Eve" at FIAC, Paris, by Aidan Gallery.
- Presentation at Corpus Christi, Deichtorhallen, Hamburg, Germany.

2005

- Presentation "The Games On the Window Sills" by Gallery Lilja Zakirova on Realism '05, Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

November 16, 2005

Raoef Mamedov  
November 19 - December 24, 2005  
Reception: Saturday, December 17, 5 - 7pm

Silverstein Photography is pleased to present the first US exhibition of Russian artist/film director Raoef Mamedov.

Moscow-based Mamedov utilizes the process of film direction by collaborating with a painter, photographer, computer technician, and actors to produce extrasensory photographs. Though the scenes viewed in the final works are complex with multiple players, each actor is separately photographed with Mamedov directing the actors' emotions and providing the vision for the subsequent digitization and computer placement. Adding a strange conceptual twist, his "actors" range from institutionalized mental patients to individuals with Down Syndrome enabling him to utilize the true abilities of the actors' minds as an art medium that heighten the pieces' cultural connections and meanings.

Mamedov tackles the Bible and foundations of Christianity with straight adaptations of historical masterpieces by Nicolai Ge, Leonardo da Vinci, and Jan van Eyck. The featured works depict scenes from the New Testament played by actors with Down Syndrome. In portraying biblical characters, elements of the actors' real-time fragmented state of mind and their tendency to think in quotations highlights the humanism of those portrayed personalities. Mamedov relates the state of his actors' minds to Satori, a Zen Buddhist notion meaning sudden enlightenment or a flash of sudden awareness. This notion of a flash of consciousness elevates the visual impact of the art as an essentially pure communication of the acted message.

The main gallery includes an eight-panel piece based on Adam and Eve's expulsion from Paradise that represents Mamedov's personal views on Creation. The "actors" performing in this work are lifelong residents of a psychiatric home where Mamedov worked as an attendant from 1976 - 1980 after he left the Russian army. It was here at the institution that he realized the patients' tragic incapacity for real emotional contact.

Mamedov's aesthetic expression is a strange hybrid of science fiction fantasy and filmic realism. The schizophrenic patients he's cast have no control over the difference between the conscious and subconscious, and therefore in the artist's mind are closer to the "beginning of the history of humankind".

SILVERSTEIN PHOTOGRAPHY

## *Art in America*

**Raoef Mamedov: *The Betrayal by Judas*, 1998, Lambda print, 34 by 45¼ inches; at Silverstein Photography.**



*April 2006*

## Raoef Mamedov at Silverstein Photography

The compelling quality of Moscow-based Raoef Mamedov's tenebristic photographs derives from the genre and biblically themed paintings at their source as well as from the digital processes and collaborative efforts of their making. Among the complex works included in this show, *Adam and Eve, the Story of Mankind* (1997) is based in part on Jan van Eyck's portrayal of Adam and Eve for the *Ghent Altarpiece*; the scenes are enacted by lifelong residents of a mental hospital where Mamedov once worked as an attendant. Individually composed images concerning the life of Christ are portrayed by actors with Down syndrome, who also appear in "The Play on the Windowsills" (2003), a five-part series inspired by Dutch genre paintings that recalls the comical, moralizing scenes of Jan Steen. The same models posed for a previous project exhibited at Silverstein in the summer of 2005, a five-part adaptation (1997) of Leonardo's *Last Supper*.

The outer, single-figure panels of Mamedov's *Adam and Eve*, which measure about 60 by 14 inches, flank other, larger images that deal primarily with the Temptation (a goat and a pomegranate) and the Expulsion from Eden. Eve's head is shaved, as is that of the figure representing God, arms outstretched, driving the first couple before him. Many of the scenes in the following series are bathed in Caravaggesque chiaroscuro in prints that seem monumental at 45 by 35 inches.

Placed side by side, the works in "The Play on the Windowsills" read as a continuous staging, the individual characters at a foreground wooden sill and against a black backdrop. Mamedov characterizes emblematic human types—the dupe, the naive—and

comments on wisdom and folly: chastity, false expectations, the evils of gambling. A patient swoons at the ministrations of a quack in a scene busy with arcane emblems: a snail, mortar and pestle, a book balanced on a woman's head. A grinning trickster with rabbit and top hat is a ringer for Robin Williams.

A scene from the life of Christ (1998) quotes Giotto's *Betrayal by Judas*, excluding nothing. Here are the raised arms, the severed ear and the kiss. The two panels of *The Annunciation* (1998), complete with lilies and a dove, derive from van Eyck. According to information provided by the gallery, each actor was photographed with Mamedov, who was then digitally removed; the model assuming the next role was inserted in his place to construct the final image.

These works are the result of a fruitful collaboration among Mamedov, his actors, a photographer, another artist and a specialist in digital composition. The collaboration is based on regard for the project's worth and empathy with the willing actors. The ethical issue that may remain recalls the Arbus question, especially her work with mental patients and others who bring to difficult images a sense of presence and shared humanity. Mamedov studied filmmaking in 1980 and since 1985 has worked as a film director.

—Edward Leffingwell

April 2006